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Leaks Are the Target, But Our Values Are the Victim

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WITH THE REAL 1984 upon us, this seems a good time to pay close attention to the words of a government official who is actually working on an issue with Orwellian implications. The official is Richard K. Willard, 35, acting chief of the civil division in the Department of Justice, and the man responsible for the administration's efforts to stop leaks of official secrets.

Willard is a Washington rarity: he says what he means. No palaver, double-think or newspeak — well, not much. He is the principal author of a proposal to make 127,750 government employees with access to secrets liable for punishment, including loss of their jobs, if they decline to take lie-detector tests in the course of investigations into leaks.

Willard's proposed presidential directive also requires those 127,750 people to submit to the government for clearance, for the rest of their lives, anything they write for public dissemination (including novels, speeches, anything) that might touch on secrets they learned while in government, or on anything to do with "intelligence activities."

Why does Willard endorse these ideas?

Not because he thinks they will stop leaks. "I don't think we will ever have a leak-free government," he acknowledged in a recent interview. These new requirements, he said, are intended to "change the attitudes of government officials" so they will "come to believe that it is wrong to leak classified information."

"I think if we can reduce the volume of leaks by 50 percent, that would make a very serious contribution to improving our country's ability to carry out foreign policy, defense policy, and improving the effectiveness of our intelligence agencies."

Willard is not hiding what he is talking about, which is intimi-

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dation of officials. The language he uses in conversation is revealing. "Leaks are consensual crimes," he says. "You have to target government employees who have access to [classified] information. . . ." Describing his own decision to abandon the idea of making leaking *per se* a criminal act (which he once recommended), Willard noted that administrative sanctions that had a real prospect of being enforced were probably preferable to criminal sanctions: "If the leaker thinks, 'Well, there's a 10 percent chance of getting fired,' that's probably better than having the leaker think there's one chance in a million of going to jail, in terms of deterring the conduct."

Similarly, his desire to institutionalize the use of polygraphs in leak investigations is meant to be a threat. "We think that will have a deterrent impact — that is, the prospect of the polygraph will discourage people from leaking classified information."

This is gruesome stuff — bad enough to infuriate a lot of senior officials in the Reagan administration. The presidential directive Willard wrote — issued last August — got through the administration by a back door; it wasn't cleared through the usual White House staff system, apparently because Willard and his allies knew that it might not get through. The prospect of routinely "fluttering" senior officials of the American government (that's the jargon for a lie-detector test) apparently provoked Secretary of State George P. Shultz to threaten to resign. But Willard thinks it's just fine — all in the cause of a better "attitude."

How does the threat of mass polygraph examinations and lifetime censorship agreements jibe with his vision of what sort of country the United States ought to be? Willard chooses not to answer exactly that question:

"The policy that we've described is quite limited, in terms of having a number of conditions and qualifications and safeguards," he says reassuringly. Nothing to worry about.

In a public appearance last week Willard insisted that because previous administra-

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